Mediators
Gilles Deleuze

If things aren't going well in contemporary thought, it's because there is a return under the name of "modernism" to abstractions, back to the problem of origins and so on. Any analysis in terms of movements or vectors is blocked. We are now in a very weak phase, a period of reaction. Yet, philosophy thought it was through with the problem of origins. It was no longer a question of starting or finishing. The question was rather, what happens "in between"? And it's just the same with physical movements.

For example, in the context of sports and popular habits, movements undergo transformations. We got by for a long time with an energetic conception of movement, which presumes a point of contact or that we are the source of movement. Running, throwing a javelin and so on: effort, resistance, with a starting point, a lever. But nowadays we see movement defined less and less in relation to a point of leverage. Many of the new sports — surfing, windsurfing, hang gliding — take the form of entry into an existing wave. There's no longer an origin as starting point, but a sort of putting-into-orbit. The basic thing is how to get taken up in the movement of a big wave, a column of rising air, to "come between" rather than to be the origin of an effort.

And yet in philosophy we're going back to eternal values, and to the idea of the intellectual as their custodian. We're back to Julien Benda complaining that Henri Bergson was a traitor to his own class, the clerical class, because he tried to think movement. These days, it's the rights of man that provide our eternal values. It's the "constitutional state" and other notions that everyone knows to be very abstract. And it is in the name of all this that thinking is fettered, that any analysis in terms of movements
is blocked. Yet, if oppression is so awful, it's because of how it limits movement, rather than because it violates eternal values. In barren times, philosophy retreats to reflecting "on" things. If it doesn't itself create anything what can it do but reflect on something? So it reflects on the eternal or the historical, but can itself no longer produce movement. What we must do, in fact, is take away from philosophers the right to reflect "on" things. The philosopher creates, he doesn't reflect.

Cinema
I have been criticized for going back to Bergson's analyses. To distinguish as Bergson did, though, between perception, affection and action as three kinds of movement is a very novel approach. It remains novel, and I don't think it's ever been quite absorbed; it's one of the most difficult and finest bits of Bergson's thought. But this analysis applies automatically to cinema: cinema was invented while Bergson's thought was taking shape. Movement was brought into concepts at precisely the same time that it was brought into images. Bergson presents one of the first cases of self-moving thought. Because it's not enough to say concepts possess movement; one must also construct intellectually mobile concepts — just as it's not enough to make moving shadows on the wall, one has to construct images that can move by themselves.

In my first book on cinema, I considered the cinematic image as this kind of image that becomes self-moving. In the second book, I considered the cinematic image as it takes on its own temporality. So I'm in no sense taking cinema as something to reflect on. Rather, I'm taking a field in which what interests me actually takes place: What are the conditions for self-motion or autotemporality in images, and how have these two factors evolved since the end of the nineteenth century? For as soon as there is a cinema based on time rather than movement, the image obviously has a different nature than it had in the first period. And only cinema can provide the laboratory to show us this, insofar, precisely, as movement and time have become constituents of the image itself.

The first phase of cinema, then, is the image's self-motion. This happened to take the form of a cinema of narration — but it didn't have to. Noël Burch has argued that narration was not part of cinema from the outset. What led movement-images,
that is, the self-movement of the image, to produce narration, was the sensorimotor schema. Cinema is not inherently narrative: it becomes narrative when it takes as its object the sensorimotor schema; someone on the screen perceives, feels, reacts. It takes some believing: the hero, in a given situation, reacts; the hero always knows how to react. And it implies a particular conception of cinema. Why did it become American, Hollywoodian? For the simple reason that this schema was fundamentally American. It all came to an end with World War II, for suddenly people no longer really believed it was possible to react to situations. The postwar situation was beyond them. We thus get Italian Neorealism, which presents people placed in situations that cannot advance through reactions, through actions. No possible reactions — does that mean everything becomes lifeless? No, not at all. We get purely optical and aural situations which give rise to completely novel ways of understanding resisting. We get Neorealism, the French New Wave and an alternate American cinema breaking with Hollywood.

There's still movement in images, of course, but with the appearance of purely optical and aural situations, yielding time-images, movement is no longer specifically what matters, it amounts only to an index. Time-images have nothing to do with before and after, with succession. Succession was there from the start as the law of narration. Time-images are not things happening in time, but new forms of coexistence, ordering, transformation.

What interests me are the relations between the arts, science and philosophy. There is no order of priority among these disciplines. Each is creative. The true object of science is to create functions, the true object of art is to create sensory aggregates and the true object of philosophy is to create concepts. From this viewpoint, given these general heads, however sketchy, of function, aggregate and concept, we can pose the question of echoes and resonances between them. How is it possible — in their completely different lines of development, with quite different rhythms and movements of production — how is it possible for a concept, an aggregate and a function to interact?

An initial example: in mathematics there's a kind of space called "Riemannian" (after Georg Riemann). Mathematically very well defined in relation to functions, this sort of
space involves setting up little neighboring portions that can be joined up in an infinite number of ways; it made possible, among other things, the Theory of Relativity. Now, if I take modern cinema, I see that after the war a new kind of space based on neighborhoods appears, the connections between one little portion and another being made in an infinite number of possible ways, and not being predetermined. These two spaces are unconnected. If I say the cinematic space is a Riemannian space, it seems facile, and yet in a way it's quite true. I'm not saying that cinema is doing what Riemann did; but if one takes a space defined simply as neighborhoods joined up in an infinite number of possible ways, with visual and aural neighborhoods joined in a tactile way, then it's Bresson's space. Bresson isn't Riemann, of course, but what he does in cinema is the same as what happened in mathematics, and echoes it.

Another example: In physics there's something that interests me a lot, which has been analyzed by Ilya Prigogine and Isabelle Stengers, called the “baker transformation.” You take a square, stretch it out into a rectangle, cut the rectangle in half, stick one half back on top of the other, and go on repeatedly altering the square by stretching it out into a rectangle again, as though you were kneading it. After a certain number of transformations any two points, however close they may have been in the original square, are bound to end up in two different halves. This leads to a whole theory, to which Prigogine attaches great importance in relation to his probabilistic physics.

Or consider Alain Resnais: In his film _Je t’aime, je t’aime_ (1967), we see a hero taken back to one moment in his life, and the moment is then set in a series of different contexts, like layers constantly shifted around, altered, rearranged so that what is close in one layer becomes very distant in another. It’s a very striking conception of time, very intriguing cinematically, and it echoes the “baker transformation.” So I don’t feel it’s outrageous to say that Resnais comes close to Prigogine, or that Godard, for different reasons, comes close to Réne Thom. I’m not saying that Resnais and Prigogine, or Godard and Thom, are doing the same thing. I’m pointing out, rather that there are remarkable similarities between scientific creators of functions and cinematic creators of images. And the same goes for philosophical concepts, for there are distinct concepts of these spaces.
Mediators

Thus, philosophy, art and science come into relations of mutual resonance and exchange, but always for internal reasons. The way they impinge on one another depends on their own evolution. In this sense, then, we really have to see philosophy, art and science as separate melodic lines in constant interplay with one another. And in this, philosophy has no reflective pseudo-primacy, nor, equally, any creative inferiority. Creating concepts is no less difficult than creating new visual or aural combinations, or creating scientific functions. What we must recognize is that the interplay between the different lines is not a matter of mutual monitoring or reflection. A discipline that sets out to follow a creative movement coming from outside would itself relinquish any creative role. What counts has never been to go along with some related movement, but to make one's own movement. If no one starts, no one will move. Nor is interplay an exchange: everything happens by giving or taking.

Mediators are fundamental. Creation is all about mediators. Without them, nothing happens. They can be people — artists or scientists for a philosopher; philosophers or artists for a scientist — but things as well, even plants or animals, as in Carlos Castaneda. Whether they're real or imaginary, animate or inanimate, one must form one's mediators. It's a series: if you don't belong to a series, even a completely imaginary one, you're lost. I need my mediators to express myself, and they'd never express themselves without me: one is always working in a group, even when it doesn't appear to be the case. And all the more so when it's apparent — Félix Guattari and I are one another's mediators.

The formation of mediators in a community is well seen in the work of the Canadian filmmaker Pierre Perrault: having found mediators, I can say what I have to say. Perrault thinks that if he speaks on his own, even if he invents fictions, he's bound to come out with an intellectual's discourse, he won't get away from a "master's or colonist's discourse," an established discourse. What we have to do is catch someone else "legending," "caught in the act of legending". Then a minority discourse, with one or many speakers, takes shape. We here come upon the function of Bergson's "fabulation" — to catch someone in the act of legending is to catch the movement of constitution of a people. A people isn't something preexistent. In a way, a people is what's missing, as Paul Klee used to say. Was there ever a Palestinian people? Israel says no. Of course
there was, but that's not the point. The thing is, once the Palestinians have been thrown out of their territory, then to the extent that they resist they enter the process of constituting a people. It corresponds exactly to what Pernau calls "being caught in the act of legending." It's how any people is constituted. So, to the established fictions that are always rooted in a colonist's discourse, we oppose a minority discourse, with mediators.

This idea that truth is not something preexistent that we have to discover, but that it has to be created in every domain, is obvious in the sciences, for example. Even in physics, there is no truth that doesn't presuppose a system of symbols, even if they are only coordinates. There is no truth that doesn't "false" established ideas. To say that "truth is created" implies that the production of truth involves a series of operations that amount to working on a material — strictly speaking, a series of falsifications. When I work with Guattari, each of us falsifies the other — which is to say, each of us understands in his own way notions put forward by the other. A reflective series with two terms takes shape. And there can be series with several terms, or complicated branching series. This capacity of falsity to produce truth is what mediators are all about.

A Political Digression

Many people expected a new kind of discourse from a socialist government. A discourse very close to real movements and, so, capable of reconciling these movements by establishing arrangements compatible with them. Take New Caledonia, for example. When Edgard Pisani said, "Whatever happens, there'll be independence," that in itself was a new kind of discourse. It meant: Rather than pretending to be unaware of the real movements in order to negotiate over them, we're going to recognize the outcome right away, and negotiations will take place in the light of this outcome set in advance. We'll negotiate ways and means, the speed of change. So there were complaints from the Right, which thought, in line with the old way of doing things, that there should be, above all, no talk of independence, even if we knew it was unavoidable, because it had to be made to depend on very hard bargaining. I don't think that people on the Right are deluded — they're no more stupid than anyone else, but their method is to oppose movement. It's the same as the opposition to Bergson in philosophy, it's all the same thing. Embracing movement or blocking it: politically, two completely different methods.
of negotiation. For the Left, this means a new way of talking. It's not so much a matter of convincing, as of being open about things. Being open is setting out the "facts" not only of a situation, but of a problem. Making visible things that would otherwise remain hidden. On the Caledonian problem, we're told that at a certain period the territory was treated as a settler colony, so the Canaques became a minority in their own territory. When did this start? How did it proceed? Who was responsible? The Right refuses these questions. If they're valid questions, then by establishing the facts we state a problem that the Right wants to hide. Because once the problem has been set out, we can no longer get away from it, and the Right itself has to talk in a different way. So the job of the Left, whether in or out of power, is to find the sort of problem that the Right wants at all costs to hide.

The Conspiracy of Imitators
How can we define a crisis in contemporary literature? The system of best-sellers is a system of rapid turnover. Many bookshops are already becoming like the record shops that only stock things listed in a top ten or hit parade. This is what Apostrophes is all about. Fast turnover necessarily means selling people what they expect; even what's "daring," "scandalous," strange and so on falls into the market's predictable forms. The conditions for literary creation, which emerge only unpredicably, with a slow turnover and progressive recognition, are fragile. Future Beckett or Kafka, who will, of course, be unlike Beckett or Kafka, may well not find a publisher, and if they don't nobody will notice. As publisher Jérôme Lindon says, "you don't notice that what you don't know isn't there." The USSR lost its literature without anyone noticing, for example. We may congratulate ourselves on the quantitative increase in books, and larger print runs—but young writers will end up molded in a literary space that leaves them no possibility of creating anything. We'll be faced with the monstrosity of a standard novel, imitations of Balzac, Stendhal, Céline, Beckett or Duras, it hardly matters which. Or rather, Balzac himself is inimitable: Céline is inimitable: they're new syntaxes, the "unexpected." What gets imitated is always itself a copy. Imitators imitate one another, and that's how they proliferate and give the impression that they're improving on their model, because they know how it's done, they know the answers.
It's awful, what they do on *Apostrophes*. Technically, the program is very well done, the way it's put together, the shots. And yet it's the zero state of literary criticism, literature as light entertainment. Bernard Pivot has never hidden the fact that what he really likes is football and food. Literature becomes a game show. The real problem with the TV program is the invasion by games. It's rather worrying that there's an enthusiastic audience that thinks it's watching some cultural activity when it sees two men competing to make a word with nine letters. There are strange things going on, summed up by the filmmaker Roberto Rossellini. Listen carefully:

The world today is too pointlessly cruel. Cruelty is crushing someone else's personality, reducing someone to the state where they'll make a total confession of anything. If there was some reason for the confession, I could accept it, but if it's the act of a voyeur, someone bent, then we have to call it cruelty. I strongly believe that cruelty is always an expression of infantilism. All art these days is becoming daily more infantile. Everyone has the crazy desire to become as childish as possible. Not naive, but childish... Art these days is either moaning or cruel. There's nothing else around, either one means, or one commits some absolutely pointless act of petty cruelty. Look, for example, at all this speculation (for that's what we have to call it) on incommunicability, alienation — I see in it no sympathy whatever, just gross indulgence. And that, as I said, has made me give up cinema.

And it should, still more, make one give up interviews. Cruelty and infantilism are a test of strength even for those who indulge them, and they force themselves even on those who try to get away from them.

**Couples Everywhere**

We sometimes behave as though people can't express themselves. In fact, though, they're always expressing themselves. The sorriest couples are the ones in which the woman can't be preoccupied or tired without the man saying, "What's wrong? Say something," or the man, without the woman saying... and so on. Radio and television have spread this spirit everywhere, and we're riddled with pointless talk, insane amounts of words and images. Stupidity is never blind or mute. So the problem is no longer getting people to express themselves, but providing little gaps of solitude and silence in which they might eventually find something to say. Repressive forces don't stop people from ex-
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pressing themselves, but rather, force them to express themselves. What a relief to have nothing to say, the right to say nothing, because only then is there a chance of framing the rare, or ever rarer, the thing that might be worth saying. What we're overcome by these days isn't any blocking of communication, but pointless statements. But what we call the meaning of a statement is its point. That's the only definition of meaning, and it amounts to the same as the novelty of statement. One can listen to people for hours but what's the point...that's why it's so difficult to discuss anything, that's why there's never any point discussing things. We don't say to someone, "What you're saying is pointless!" We can say, "It's wrong" But the problem isn't that what someone says is wrong, but that it's stupid or irrelevant — that it's already been said a thousand times. The notions of relevance, necessity, point are a thousand times more significant than the notion of truth. Not because they replace it, but because they're the measure of the truth of what I'm saying. It's the same in mathematics: Jules-Henri Poincaré used to say that many mathematical theories are completely irrelevant, pointless. He didn't even bother to say they were wrong — that wouldn't have been much of an indictment.

**Oedipus in the Colonies**

Maybe journalists are partly responsible for this crisis in literature. Journalists have, of course, often written books. But when writing books, they used to adopt a form different from newspaper journalism — they became writers. The situation has changed, because journalists have become convinced that the book form is theirs by right, and that it takes no special effort to use this form. In one fell swoop and en masse, journalists have taken over literature. And the result is one version of the standard novel, a sort of *Oedipus in the Colonies* — a reporter's travels, arranged around his pursuit of women, or the search for his father. The situation affects all writers: any writer must turn himself and his work into journalism. In the extreme case, everything takes place between a journalist author and a journalist critic, the book being only a link between them, and hardly needing to exist. The book has become an account of activities, experiences, purposes and ends that unfold elsewhere. It has itself become a record. Now everyone seems, and seems to themselves, to have a book in them, just by virtue of having a particular job, or a family even, a sick parent, a rude boss. A novel for everyone in the family.
or the business... It's forgotten that for anyone, literature involves a special sort of exploration and effort, a particular creative purpose that can be pursued only within literature itself, whose job is in no way to register the immediate results of very different activities and purposes. Books become "secondary" when marketing takes over.

If Literature Dies, It Will Be by Assassination

Those who haven't properly read or understood Marshall McLuhan may think it's only natural for audiovisual media to replace books, since one assumes these new forms contain all the creative possibilities of a defunct literature or other older modes of expression. It's not true. For if audiovisual media ever replace literature, it won't be as competing means of expression, but as a monopoly of structures that also stifles the creative possibilities in those media themselves. If literature dies, it will have to be a violent death, a political assassination (as happened in the USSR, even if no one notices). It's not a matter of comparing different sorts of media. The choice isn't between written literature and audiovisual media. It's between creative forces in audiovisual media as well as literature and forces of domestication. It's highly unlikely that audiovisual media will find the conditions for creation, if they've already been lost in literature. Creative possibilities may be very different in different modes of expression, but they're related to the extent that they must counter the introduction of a cultural space of markets and conformity — that is, a space of "producing for the market" — together.

Style: Qualitative Mediation

Style is a literary notion: a syntax. And yet one speaks of style in the sciences, where there's no syntax. One speaks of style in sports. Very detailed studies have been done on style in sports, but I don't know much about them; they may show that style amounts to innovation. Sports, of course, have their quantitative scale of records, dependent on improvements in equipment, shoes, vaulting poles.... But there are also qualitative transformations, ideas, which are a matter of style: how we went from the scissor jump to the belly roll and Fosbury flop; how hurdles ceased to present obstacles and came simply to mark a longer stride. Why not start here, why do we have to go through a whole history of quantitative advances? Each new style amounts not so much to a new
“move,” but a linked sequence of postures, the equivalent, that is, of a syntax, based on an earlier style but breaking with it. Technical advances take effect only by being taken up and incorporated in a new style. This is the importance of “inventors” in sports: they’re qualitative mediators. In tennis, for example: When did the kind of return of service in which the returning ball lands on your opponent’s feet as he runs to the net, first appear? I believe it was a great Australian player, Bromwich, before the war. Björn Borg obviously invented a new style that opened up tennis to a sort of proletariat. There are inventors in tennis, just as there are elsewhere: John McEnroe is an inventor, that is, a stylist — he’s brought into tennis Egyptian postures (in his service) and Dostoyevskian reflexes (“if you spend your time voluntarily banging your head against the wall, life becomes impossible”). And then imitators can beat the inventors and do it better than they can: they’re sports’ best-sellers. Borg produced a race of obscure proletarians, and McEnroe can get beaten by a quantitative champion. We might say that the copiers, by taking advantage of a movement coming from elsewhere, become all the stronger, and that sporting bodies show remarkable ingratitude toward the inventors by whom they live and prosper. It doesn’t matter: the history of sports runs through these inventors, who account in each case to the unexpected, a new syntax, transformations, and without whom the purely technological advances would have remained quantitative, irrelevant and pointless.

AIDS and Global Strategy

One very important problem in medicine is the evolution of diseases. There are, of course, new external factors, new forms of microbe or virus, new social conditions. But there’s also symptomatology, the grouping of symptoms: over a very short time scale, symptoms cease to be grouped in the same way, and diseases are isolated that were previously split among various different contexts. Parkinson’s disease, Roger’s disease and others present major changes in the grouping of symptoms (we might speak of a syntax of medicine). The history of medicine is made up of these groupings, these isolations, these regroupings, which here again become possible with technological advances, but are not determined by those advances. What has happened since World War II in this respect? The discovery of “stress” illnesses, in which the disorder is no
longer produced by an attacking agent, but by nonspecific defensive reactions that get out of hand or become exhausted. Medical journals after World War II were full of discussions of stress in modern societies, and the new ordering of illnesses that might be drawn from it. More recently there was the discovery of autoimmune diseases, diseases of the self: defense mechanisms that no longer recognize the cells of the organism they’re supposed to protect, or external agents that make these cells impossible to distinguish from others. AIDS comes somewhere between these two poles of stress and autoimmunity. Perhaps we’re heading toward diseases without a doctor or patient, as François Dagognet says in his analysis of contemporary medicine: with images rather than symptoms, and carriers rather than sufferers. It’s a problem for the welfare system, but it’s worrying in other ways as well. It’s striking how this new style of disease is like global politics or strategy. They tell us the risk of war comes not only from a specific external potential aggressor, but from our defensive reactions going out of control or breaking down (which is the rationale for properly controlled atomic weapons systems…). Now our diseases fit the same pattern — our nuclear policy corresponds to our diseases. Homosexuals are in danger of being assigned the part of some biological aggressor, just as minorities or refugees will fill the role of the enemy. It’s one more reason to insist on a socialist government that refuses this dual image of disease and society.

We have to see creation as the tracing of a path between impossibilities… Kafka explained how it was impossible for a Jewish writer to speak German, impossible for him to speak Czech and impossible for him not to speak. Perrault comes upon the same problem: the impossibility of not speaking, of speaking English, of speaking French. Creation takes place in strangled channels. Even in some particular language, even in French, for example, a new syntax is a foreign language within the language. A creator who isn’t seized at the throat by a set of impossibilities is no creator. A creator is someone who creates his own impossibilities, and thereby creates possibilities. It’s by banging your head against the wall that you find an answer. You have to work on the wall, because without a set of impossibilities, you won’t have the line of flight, the exit that is creation, the power of falsity that is truth. You have to be liquid or gaseous, precisely because normal perception and opinion are solid, geometric. It’s what Bergson did in philosophy, Virginia Woolf or Henry James with the novel, Jean Renoir in cinema (and
experimental cinema, which has gone a long way exploring the states of matter). Not leaving Earth, at all — but becoming all the more earthly by inventing laws of liquids and gases on which the Earth depends. So style needs a lot of silence and work to make a whirlpool at some point, then flies out like a match; children follow beside the water in a gutter. For a style definitely doesn’t come about by putting words together, combining phrases, using ideas. You have to open words, rend things, to free Earth’s vectors. All writers, all creators, are shadows. How can one write a biography of Proust or Kafka? Once you’re writing, shadows come before bodies. Truth is a production of existence. Not something in the head, but something that exists. Writers produce real bodies. With Fernando Pessoa they’re imaginary people — but not so very imaginary, because he gives them a way of writing, of operating. The main thing, though, is that it’s not Pessoa who’s doing what they’re doing. You don’t get very far in literature with the system, “we saw a lot and traveled a long way,” in which the author first does things and then tells us about them. Narcissism in authors is awful because shadows can’t be narcissistic. No more interviews, then. What’s bad is not having to cross a desert, if one’s old and patient enough, but for young writers to be born in a desert, because they’re in danger of seeing their venture grounded before it even gets going. And yet, it’s impossible for the new race of writers, already engaged in their work and their styles, not to be born.

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Notes


